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Employee recognition awards sizzle

By Mike Mansfield

It was a day for picnic and praise, as the first of the new semi-annual DAS Employee Recognition Awards were presented on May 26.

In keeping with the Spring Fling theme, over 30 DAS employees and their guests gathered for a barbecue and picnic at the Solomon Welles House in Wethersfield.

Attendees piled paper plates high with corn on the cob, burgers, and grilled chicken. Donna Micklus' Bulldog, Tucker, was the mascot for the day and kept watch over the food platters longing for a mis-handled hamburger to drop his way.

And, some time between the last cheeseburger and first slice of cake, the awards were given out to well-deserving employees.



DAS employees chat with Commissioner Waters at the ERP awards picnic.

Employee Recognition Award Committee Chairman Steve Soklow said this round was an unqualified success. "Changes in the program's timing, format, and promotion, as well as the new easy-to-use online ballot on DAS Central, seemed to help create a new agency-wide enthusiasm for the program, and that was reflected in the

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Session success

By Donna Micklus

As the gavel fell on the 1999 legislative session, Janis Nome was smiling. And why shouldn't she? All of DAS' major legislative proposals passed.

"We had a very successful year, and some of our bills were difficult ones," Nome said. She said key legislation was adopted in the areas of procurement, Set-Aside, and debt collection.

The adoption of DAS' procurement bill makes some sweeping changes to the current legislation. The most notable, Nome said, is the creation of a pilot program for the use of multiple criteria purchasing, rather than strictly low bid.

"This program lets us look at other factors in the bidding process and gives us more flexibility to make a good business decision." She added, "I like to use the example of the bulletproof vest. Do you

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nominations and the winners,” Soklow said.

“We received 38 nominations in total, recognizing service that had been provided by every single unit within

DAS,” Soklow said. What’s more, the winners came from four different areas of DAS.

Chris Roberts, from FAR Newington, received his second Employee Recognition Award. This time, it was the *Customer*



ERP awardee Chris Roberts with Commissioner Waters.

Service Award for his work on the move of the Accident Lien Team to another building.

The *Going the Extra Mile Award* went to Kevin Backman of the surplus facility in Middletown for coordinating the removal of DAS furniture, equipment, and records from the warehouse in a very short timeframe.

Monir Mafi and Roger Sherman of MIS shared the *Innovation Award* for developing an APS

reporting tool, which saves a significant amount of processing time and is now in use at many customer agencies.

first awards cycle.

“The response we’ve received has been very positive,” he said. “People have been saying they had a lot of fun with it, and that’s exactly the way it should be. After all, we’re celebrating the success of DAS staff in treating customers like they should be treated.”

Soklow said he will continue to

welcome any new ideas to make the program even better. “We’ve heard several suggestions already, and we’ll be trying to incorporate as many new ideas as possible,” he said.

Soklow asked that special thanks go to the 1998 ERP Committee. “These are the folks who undertook the tough job of building all the foundation pieces of the current program. Without their creativity, none of this would have happened. Who knows what they’ll come up with for the fall cycle?” Stay tuned.



Kevin Backman with Commissioner Waters following the awards ceremony.



Roger Sherman and Monir Mafi proudly display their award to Commissioner Waters.

The *Team Excellence Award* went to the Federal Surplus Property unit, including Dan Barrows, Doug DiPersio, Paul Greco (also a two-time winner), Carolyn St. Paul, and Kenn Stephenson for turning around the program, making it profitable for the first time in 1997/1998, and continuing the upward trend this year.

Soklow said he and the new ERP Committee are extremely upbeat about the success of their



Dan Barrows, Carolyn St. Paul, Kenn Stephenson, and Commissioner Waters after the awards presentation. Missing: Doug DiPersio and Paul Greco.



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Helen Robbins from the Dept. of Economic and Community Development thanked **Patty Gallucci, Larry King, and Roy Wynne** for the superb production of the Connecticut Economic Conference Board's Annual Report to the Governor and General Assembly, and for making sure every deadline was met.

Kudos to the **Food Distribution Team** from Roy Dion for an exceptional job with DAS' first Commodity Processing Food Show. "This clearly demonstrates your initiative, enthusiasm, and professionalism. Way to go!"

Laura Duffy from the Dept. of Children and Families commended **Michelle Burns** for answering her questions quickly and promptly on exams DAS was administering. "Well done!"

Robert Wallace extended his appreciation to **Peter Varhol** for making the unit's move to the ground floor almost painless. "He worked hard, fast, and always with a smile or a funny comment."

Jerry Lynn, Deb Atkinson, Norma Villanueva, and Dave Swenson were praised by Arthur Bogen of Down to Earth, LLC for providing superior customer service with a quick turnaround and prompt payment of invoices. He said, "Their responsiveness ...contributes to the fulfilling experience this contract has become."

Consultant Ann Brickley of Wethersfield applauded **J. Carlos Velez** for being "unbelievably helpful" with the Set-Aside program options on the DAS

website, showing her how to access different information and giving her suggestions under which categories to register a business.

Karen M. Kucher from the Northeastern Connecticut Community Development Corporation praised **Bernie Blumenthal** for "always being most supportive. We appreciate his knowledge and quick response to any insurance concerns we may have."

Thanks to **Chris Smith** from Robert Wallace for providing excellent customer service in their office relocation. "Chris had our computers up and running quickly and was there to make necessary adjustments when we had some furniture location changes."

Peter K. Kukiel from the Dept. of Environmental Protection took advantage of the state master contract with Xerox Corporation on the DAS website and commended the **Procurement Staff** for their "forward-thinking approaches to making basic, yet essential business management services available to state agencies."

Bill Skyrme was praised by Anne Pomeroy-Dixon for doing a "gorgeous job" with the HRBC website links.

Commissioner Barbara Waters commended **Robert Cosgrove** for the changes made to the APS system. "Your responsiveness on this was great!"

A note of thanks to **Chris Smith** from Joe Prevuznak for enhancing his PC, enabling him to

monitor the General Assembly from his workstation. "I appreciate the prompt response on such short notice."

The Hartford Courant's May 27 online column's featured article, "The Web According to Zoe,"

Hats Off

By Cindy Duberek

complimented the state's ConneCT website presence and extoled some of its newest features. This article can be viewed at: <http://www.courant.com/five/zoe/>.

V. Jean Michael, David Swenson, Jerry Lynn, and Deb Atkinson were commended by Grace Whitney, Ph.D. from the Dept. of Social Services for their efficiency, dedication, congeniality, and helpfulness during the transition of the CT Head Start and Healthy Child Care grants from the Governor's Office to DAS.

Jason Amato applauded **Carl Passanisi Jr.** for answering all of his concerns regarding examination information after applying for a position and for resolving his concerns on how to clear up a matter.

Lee Erdmann, town manager from Wethersfield was very impressed with **Kenn Stephenson** and his quick response to his concerns with the surplus warehouse, proclaiming that "things have changed dramatically at DAS."

Making a move, thanks to CareerPower

In February, FAR's Lorraine Lombardi attended her first CareerPower seminar. She learned about the CareerPower program, and learned even more about herself.

"Through CareerPower, I really discovered what makes me happy in my job. Years ago I used to work in personnel and always enjoyed that type of work. After going through the first CareerPower session, it reconfirmed my initial feeling of wanting to work in some kind of HR capacity."



"I must admit that CareerPower coaches throw a lot of information at people in the training session," said CareerPower coach Cheryl Welton. At the first coaching session, Welton sat down with Lombardi and went through the CareerPower development plan to map out action steps necessary to achieve career goals.

"After meeting with Lorraine and finalizing her development plan, I felt she had a tangible outline of what she wanted to do," said Welton. "I would encourage anyone who was interested in formalizing their CareerPower development plan to sit down with a CareerPower coach and map out where they want to go with their career."

"I was also able to sit down with my supervisor, former FAR director Wayne Seabury, and identify additional training and seminars I should attend to brush up on my skills," said Lombardi.

"I'm thrilled to be in HRBC," said Lombardi. "I really enjoy the work I'm doing, and didn't have to re-acclimate myself to a new environment because I stayed within DAS."

"It couldn't have worked out better," said Lombardi's current supervisor, HRBC Director Tina Lawson. "Lorraine came in here, hit the ground running, and never looked back. She is doing a fabulous job."

Solutions to FAR's Q & A

Management Information Solutions has been overhauling the Q & A database applications at FAR Newington for some time now. The goal is to consolidate the data for easier queries and reporting of information. Q & A logs and tracks case history input as well as current information.

"The Q & A system is antiquated," said MIS system analyst Dick Omohundro. "Information is scattered, there's a lot of double entries and redundancy," he added.

Previously, employees had to go to one computer for specific information and then to another computer database for the rest of the profile.

"In other words," said Omohundro, "they were getting the information they needed a little piece at a time."

That's not even the toughest part of it.

The computer software used in the Trust offices applications dated back to 1968. To make a change, the user would have had to fill out paperwork and submit it to have any effect on the system.

Historical information is kept on microfiche, and users have no capability of viewing historical information online.

There were different pockets of information and it was a scavenger hunt to find some, or even all of the data. MIS is trying to consolidate the information,

"MIS has been great to work with. They're really getting us into the 21st century."

Kathy Sobieski, FAR Newington

eliminate redundant entries and data, and make querying information easier with zero turnaround time in getting information.

"Just being able to take the same information and move it into another application is great," said Kathy Sobieski of FAR Newington. "You don't need to reinvent the wheel every time you need the data and you can continue to build off of the information very easily. MIS has been great to work with. They're really getting us into the 21st century," she added.

Keeping up with the Joneses

By John McKay

It makes perfect sense that Graham Jones likes to travel. He's been doing it since he was a little boy.

Jones was born in Bristol, England and moved to the United States in 1948 when he was 13.

"My father was an engineer and got the opportunity to work for Pratt & Whitney, so we picked up and moved to Connecticut. It was very exciting."

With that moving experience as a child, it's no wonder Jones and his wife Barbara own a 33-ft., 13,000 lb. camper-trailer.

"We love to travel around and explore the rest of the country," said Jones. He's traveled as far away as Tennessee, Florida, and as close as upstate New York and Greenfield, Massachusetts.

"It's very relaxing and we thoroughly enjoy it," he said. Sometimes Jones and his wife travel alone or with another couple, but always with their

in handling large vehicles through club sponsored camping "samborees."

The club is loosely based on the biblical Good Samaritan who aided travelers.

"The samborees I attend give pointers and lessons on how to handle a vehicle this size," said Jones.

"These campers are tough to park and the Good Neighbor Sam clubs have given me great pointers on maneuvering the rig. I

was in Disneyworld in Florida and tried to park the camper several times before giving up. Now that I've taken these lessons, I park the camper almost anywhere."

Good Neighbor Sam gives additional training on safety, how to help other motorists, and defensive driving techniques.

The training is sponsored by the

American Automobile Association (AAA) and according to Jones, "If it saves even one life, the training is well worth it."



MIS' Graham Jones

Jones, an MIS systems developer 3, originally became interested in electronics when he joined the Air Force.

"I was with the ground radio repair unit, and really had a knack for it," he said.

Jones then went to the Ward School of Electronics

which is now part of the Univer-

Up Close

sity of Hartford. He said electronics just naturally led him into computers and computer programming.

"When we travel, I really relax because I get away from all the hectic computer work I'm usually involved in," he said.

"There are no computers when we go camping and no email to check. I actually revert to tinkering and fixing things with my hands, using tools, and getting a little dirty. I love it."



Jones is no stranger to travel. He often gets behind the wheel of his RV, and, along with his wife and two dogs, loves to explore the United States.

two pedigree dogs: Hansel, a Belgian Tervuren, and Penny, a Shih-Tzu.

Jones participates in a Good Neighbor Sam club, and has honed his skills

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buy the cheapest vests or those that in the long run will prove to be the most effective?" she asked rhetorically.

Nome was quick to point out the involvement of the procurement office in getting the legislation passed.

"The staff was involved in this effort from the very beginning, reviewing statutes and identifying those that impeded a more streamlined process." She also said that Procurement Manager Jim Passier's efforts showed the level of support from the agency.

"One reason we got support from the legislators was that we were so well prepared. We could answer their questions and get them information instantaneously." Passier called the legislation "a great step forward for us and will lead to many changes in the way we operate and interact with our customers and do business."

Nome said that only a few other states are so progressive in procurement legislation, "putting Connecticut and DAS on the cutting edge nationally."

Other procurement related legislation increased the dollar limit on p-card purchases to \$10,000, which will allow the card to be used for a broader range of purchases.

Legislation was also enacted that permanently transfers the marketing and certification components of the Set-Aside Program from the Department of Economic

and Community Development to DAS.

"Carlos Velez and his team have worked magic with this program, enabling us to meet, let alone exceed our Set-Aside goals for the first time. I look for even greater Set-Aside victories in the future as we work to raise its statewide profile," said DAS Commissioner Barbara Waters.

FAR Newington also got some good news from this session. A new bill was adopted eliminating the requirement that DAS attempt to collect on a debt for six months before referring the debt to a consumer collection agency. Waters said the new law frees up the staff to improve efficiency by concentrating on more serious debts and more pressing collection issues.

Other legislation passed requires DAS to develop a curriculum for diversity training for state employees. Waters said DAS will issue an RFP and develop a master contract with two or three vendors. "It will be similar to the EAP process where we give agencies a choice and they can select the vendor that best meets their needs," she added.

Nome said that DAS was also called on to develop an environmental policy for the state in terms of purchasing and the products state government uses.

"Basically, we will be partnering with DEP to articulate our position and commitment to the environment," Nome explained.

Nome said she is happy to share the credit for DAS' legislative successes with Joe Prevuznak, a relatively recent addition to her staff. "Joe's extensive knowledge from his years in the Governor's Office was absolutely

invaluable. And it's much better to work as a team than as one individual," Nome said.

Summing up the past five months, Nome said this session was somewhat unique. "Not only did we achieve what we set out to in legislation, but we were also entrusted with some exciting opportunities in the areas of diversity training, the environment, and strengthening the Set-Aside program which gives us an agenda for the coming year. It's really rewarding to know that legislators turned to us for advice on what we thought was the best way to get things done," Nome said.

Big help

By Heather Cavanaugh



Babz Rawls-Ivy visits DAS on behalf of the Big Brothers Big Sisters program.

Community involvement can start at CDAS.

Last year, Governor John G. Rowland signed a bill at the *Connecticut's Promise to Our Youth* summit, enabling state employees to receive one week of vacation time for serving in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program for one year.

"Our governor said we have 50,000 state employees to ante up," said Babz Rawls-Ivy of the Connecticut Commission on National and Community Service last month at an informational session

See Volunteers, page 7

Mentoring: A lesson learned By Heather Cavanaugh

As spring turns into summer and the school year comes to a close, DAS' mentoring program sadly ends.

This year's West Middle School mentoring program concluded after nearly a full school year of weekly mentoring sessions. Chil-

dren were paired with state employees to read stories, color, solve puzzles, and share snacks. While teaching the kids, employees had the opportunity to chat with their students to learn more about their families, hobbies, and dreams. The mentoring program



Heather Cavanaugh of the Communications Office clearly enjoys her mentoring role with five-year-old Alicia

enables a special one-on-one relationship with an adult, an opportunity that many kids don't have.

Mentors from DAS this year were Heather Cavanaugh, Kerry DiMatteo, Susan Kitchens, Mike Mansfield, Carlos Velez, and Meg Yetishefsky. Merrily Moynihan of

SLC coordinates the program.

Each tutor had a unique experience with their child. Mike Mansfield said, "Meeting Omar was enriching in so many ways. I think I learned as much, if not more than he did. It wasn't until the year was over that I fully realized what had happened - we both impacted each other's lives and we'll forever be better for the experience. He told me once he wanted to be president when he grows up, and nothing would make me prouder than someday being able to cast a vote for him."

Kerry DiMatteo, after her second year in the mentoring program said, "I have seen lots of progress in my student, Octavia. I'm glad that I was able to help her to do better. We also became good friends by the end of the year."

Volunteers are always needed so check the *DAS Times* for details on how to sign up in the fall.

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for DAS employees. She explained that the offer was originally for only non-collective bargaining employees, but since then, many unions have signed on. Employees should contact their union representatives to find out if they are participating.

The Big Brothers Big Sisters program was chosen because of it's outstanding track record. It is the oldest mentoring program in the United States.

"We wrote the book on screening. We're successful because we have it down to a science," said Rawls-Ivy. She explained that information about

the prospective big brother or sister is gathered before a "match" is made. After that, there is an initial meeting between the pair, and once the relationship has been established, there is follow-up contact from program representatives.

"We are there to guide you from the beginning," said Rawls-Ivy. She added that every match is assigned a case manager that they can call with any questions or issues. The program also caters to the wants and desires of the big brother or sister. "You are able to indicate what kind of child you are looking for in the initial paperwork," explained Rawls-Ivy. "Some may want a five-year-old interested in sports, and some may want a

teenager with an appreciation of the arts. It's up to you."

Big brothers and sisters are not expected to spend money in planning activities. "You can do things like plant flowers or wash your car with them. These are activities that many of these kids have never participated in," said Rawls-Ivy.

State employees must participate outside of their normal work hours. Participants are expected to keep a log sheet of their time, which goes directly to the Office of Policy and Management.

"All we ask for is six to ten hours of your time a month," said Rawls-Ivy. "Everyone can make a difference."

All the news that fits, we print

By John McKay and Mike Mansfield

Summer worker soars

SLC's Dr. Martin Anderson is proud of his step-daughter, Sarah Downs, with good reason. Sarah has been named 1999 valedictorian for Cuginchaug Regional High School in Durham. She also has an incredible list of accomplishments and awards including: A Hartford Courant Times Mirror Scholar, member of the National Honor Society, member of the varsity cross country team, recipient of the Governor's scholar award, Xerox Award in humanities, and Rensselaer Institute of Technology math and

science medal. "I'm very proud of all of her achievements," said Anderson. "The possibilities and options that she's made for herself are limitless." This summer will be Sarah's second year as a DAS summer worker. She is the daughter of Peter Downs and Anderson's wife, Rebecca Downs Anderson.

Nationally presentable

She beat out almost 50 other applicants. HRBC's Nina Davit has been invited to present her training session, *Building Skills for the Millennium*, at the National Association for Government Training and Development's (NAGTAD) annual conference. Her presentation will be in Wilmington, Delaware in September. "I'm really excited," said Davit. "Part of my training session includes CareerPower which has had tremendous success here at DAS," (see CareerPower article on page 4). "Work is so much more than going to your office, working for eight

hours, and then going home," said Davit. "So it's important to have the skills and attitude to actually enjoy work. This really validates CareerPower and everything we've been doing for the past six months."

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Did you miss an issue? Do you want your friends and family from across the street and across the country to know what's going on at DAS? Just send them to the Communications page on the DAS website.

The Communications Office, working with Bill Skyrme of MIS, has recently posted issues of the *DAS Times* from December 1998 to May 1999 on the website. Also online are the Human Resources Business Center newsletter *CONNECTIONS*, and Procurement's publication, *Purchasing Power*, the DAS Employee Communications Plan, press releases, and recent Governor's Service Award winners.

E-commerce, open for business

Already ahead of the national curve, DAS took a major step into the future of state purchasing last month when Procurement Services launched the pilot of its e-commerce program.

Currently, 20 vendors representing 37 different contracts have signed up to participate. Five state agencies have been identified to participate in the pilot while 70 towns and schools have come on board.

"We plan to expand to additional users and continually add more contracts," says Procurement Manager Jim Passier. "We expect to have all of the currently enrolled agencies, municipalities and schools running on e-commerce by October 1."

DAS Credo in Business Plan

The DAS Credo will be incorporated in a new section of the upcoming Business Plan that emphasizes DAS' commitment to organizational standards and agency values.

Short takes